

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday March 10, 2018

Rick Barnes Admiral Schofield Jordan Bone

Tennessee

Tennessee - 84, Arkansas - 66

RICK BARNES: Coming into the game, we have so much respect for Arkansas. That's one of the teams that we hadn't beaten since we've been at Tennessee. We had a great game with them up there to start the season, and, again, the respect level for them was tremendous.

We came out the first half and arguably played the best basketball we've played all year. Jordan Bone was terrific, and the team actually feeds a lot off him when he's out there playing with the speed and quickness that he has.

Really what we talked about coming in was our defense. We're going to put it on our defense. We can't do like we did last night. We can't sweep that game under the rug and say, okay, we're here. We knew we couldn't turn it over 17 times and take bad shots like we did yesterday because Arkansas will just feast on that, and we didn't today. That had a lot to do with our offense.

Q. This is for both players, maybe Jordan first and Admiral second. First half, you guys hit 19 of 26, like 76 percent. Actually, 19 of 25. What was really working? Did you think Arkansas's defense, or were you guys just hot?

JORDAN BONE: I just think starting off the game we were really aggressive. It's really just playing within the offense. Shots were falling, and we were playing against a really good defensive team. But we were just getting to our spots, and we were making shots.

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: Like he said, we were being a lot more aggressive, and it started with Jordan Bone. I think, when he's more aggressive, him being the point guard and handling the ball most of the game, we're more aggressive because he has amazing speed and getting what we call the crack down the lane. And he



makes a lot of plays, two foot plays, and it opens up scoring opportunities for everybody. The biggest thing is it starts with him, and he really helped us out tonight.

Q. Admiral, maybe for Jordan too, do you feel like where you guys started the season in the preseason picked so low and what you did in regular season, you're still playing this tournament like you still have to validate and prove to the rest of the league and the country exactly how good you are?

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: I wouldn't say we're trying to prove anything. We just have a standard we're trying to play towards. The biggest thing is we try to go out to every game with that mindset, like we're trying to perfect our standard. We haven't done that yet, so we're still a hungry team. We still want more.

To address the preseason picks, it's motivation because the people who picked us in certain spots don't see the work that we put in in spring and off-season up until the point of the season.

The biggest thing is we can't worry about that. We've just got to worry about our jobs and doing our jobs consistently.

JORDAN BONE: He said it perfect.

Q. Jordan, a couple shots went down for you late in the shot clock. Did that get you going, or did something else get you more aggressive in that first half going to the basket?

JORDAN BONE: It was really just taking what we did in yesterday's game and just learning from that. I think we start off kind of flat offensively, and I feel like it starts with me. I just have to be aggressive. And in order for us to be an effective team, I have to get to my spots and make people react off the plays so I can get my teammates open.

Q. This is for both of you. You've got a quick turnaround playing Kentucky tomorrow. What is your mindset going into a game in which you're playing an opponent you've already beaten twice this year?

JORDAN BONE: I mean, just executing our game plan. You know, we have to get rest tonight and just do what we do. Like AD said earlier, we have a standard that

we're trying to perfect, so we just have to do that and get ready for a team that's hungry to beat us.

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: The biggest thing, it's the postseason now. A lot of teams, you can't really change who you are, but at the same time, what we did in the regular season doesn't really matter at this point. Just like any tournament, any team can make a run as deep as they want. The biggest thing is we can't go in with the mindset that we beat them twice.

For our players, we have a motto what we call run it back. When you lose, if you're a competitor, you want to run it back. That's probably the mindset they have. We'll be ready.

The biggest thing is we've got to get our bodies ready to play, get our minds ready to play, and execute the game plan for tomorrow.

Q. You guys are playing your second game in two days. They're playing the third game in three days. Did you get a sense they got fatigued? How did you think that played into it?

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: That's the blessing of a double bye. That's why you compete as hard as you can in the regular season to get a higher seed so you can get that double bye. But at the same time, it's championship season. Fatigue does play a role, but everyone is tired this time of year. The biggest thing is who wants it the most.

I can't discredit them. They're a great team, a very dangerous team if you let them get certain things in the game that apply to their winning philosophy.

For us, we didn't allow that. Taking care of the ball and not turning the ball over, taking bad shots, and leading them to run-outs and easy points in transition eliminated a lot of their scoring. The biggest thing for us is we've got to always do that. We've got to be more consistent with that. Fatigue is going to play a role in everything. Even though we've got a double bye and Kentucky's got a double bye, it's going to play a role for everyone this time of year. Right now it's just about who wants it bad enough.

Q. Rick, what did you like most about what Jordan did tonight?

RICK BARNES: That attack, and defensively, though, that's what, again, we said from the very beginning. After we waited until the game was over last night, and we talked as a team after I had a chance to see a little bit of the tape, I said, we're not going to sweep this under the rug now. We weren't very good. Not only did we turn it over 17 times, but Admiral and Grant took some really bad shots yesterday where they were

pressing, and it was simple. You do that against Arkansas, they're going to ring you up really pretty quickly.

We went back and said, we've got to see the mental concentration, the physical concentration, where on defense the details, pressuring the ball, making sure we filled the lane up, not giving driving lanes, and if you're not doing it, you're telling us you're not locked in.

So our whole deal was -- and I told every guy today. I said every one of you be ready because we have to sub. Every other possession we'll do that. But we're going to get back to playing the kind of defensive basketball we're capable of.

Q. I just wonder what you remember about the two games with Kentucky and how that game sizes up in your mind.

RICK BARNES: I'm getting older now. My memory is not that good. What I do remember the last play, if I remember right, we fouled. I think we were up three, right? And we fouled. And a free-throw block out. And we came up with it, and I think they -- I can't remember if they tried to miss it or what. But we fouled. That's what I remember -- in both games, hard fought games.

They're a totally different team than they were then. I've been watching them. They looked like -- and John does such a great job. His teams always get better late in the year. It looks like they've really made a commitment to really play big, strong basketball inside. So I think tomorrow will be that kind of game.

These guys are growing up. Like he kept saying all year, he needed time to grow up, and they picked a good time of year to do it.

Q. Rick, you said after that loss in Fayetteville that you felt like in the half-court you could get just about anything you wanted when they were pressing. Was that first half kind of what you meant? How fun was that to watch?

RICK BARNES: Well, I said, when I walked off the court at the interview, that I wish we could bottle that because it was -- we shot the ball. When you're making shots, it all looks good, but it was our defense was really good. I do think that. I thought our defense would -- and that's what we've done all year, and we're going to have to continue to do that.

But back to the question about three days, I do think that early Mike and them probably maybe wanted to be a little bit more aggressive with it, but it is a difference when you play three days in a row, three games. At the end when they were doing it, they couldn't quite do it at the pace they would have had they had more time.

But we had to handle that. We didn't handle that up there. If you go back, we had some problem with pressure. Today, for the most part, we handled it pretty well.

Q. One more on Jordan. How has his progress been this year in terms of finding that balance of aggression, but then creating for others. Do you think that recently he's maybe taken another step in that way?

RICK BARNES: His progress has been consistent, but when you go back a year ago, he missed, I think, nine, ten games. Really worked hard in the off-season at conditioning more than anything else. He can shoot the ball. He can do that. He gets caught sometimes in between when to use his speed, when to go, when not to go. He's always been a guy that defers, I think a little bit too much. You know, he understands what we're doing. And what we wanted to do is we told him a couple weeks ago, because he went through a period where he missed some layups, we said, hey, you've still got to put pressure on the rim for us. He can shoot the ball. He is a really good shooter.

We've even told him that at times when he gives the ball up -- because we moved the ball a lot. We really try to move players a lot. Once it's out of his hand, once we're down here, I said, you've got to be more aggressive, like a Jordan Bowden or someone like that, when you get the ball comes back. Because we're a team that we pass, catch, and shoot.

He can shoot it, but we need his speed. His speed really is a huge advantage. He can do that. But we also want him to use that speed on the defensive end, his speed and quickness.

Q. (Indiscernible), I don't know how much recent film you got to watch on them after their game last night. How do you think they're playing and what kind of NCAA Tournament team they could be?

RICK BARNES: I wouldn't want to play any teams in our league. I think this league has been a brutal league. I hope it doesn't affect us because we have all fought. I go back and look at this league, and there's so many teams in the league, it's been a great year for SEC basketball. I really give the commissioner and the SEC staff credit for that because, when I came into it, I remember his meeting with us, and we were the one sport in the league that wasn't living up to the standard of this league. And he said, you all have to change that.

Through scheduling, he's done what he said he would do, which means we're working hard at officiating, which is a hard thing for any conference. Mark Whitehead, then you had Dan, Mike Tranghese as a

consultant, the emphasis that he placed on it is starting to show up here. You can feel this year everywhere we went on the road, there's a real fan base for home teams. Again, I just think there's a lot of credit that goes there because we know what the SEC is about in everything. And finally basketball has lived up to it.

I'd like to think we're going to get eight teams. Who knows? I don't really look at it that much. But I do think there's not any team in this league -- any team in this league that plays in the tournament next week has a chance to do a lot of damage.

Q. Rick, Wenyen Gabriel was 7 for 7 on threes the first game today. Kentucky made a season high 12 threes. As the opposing coach, how does that strike you?

RICK BARNES: Well, we made 11. You know what, when I think about him, two years ago he was the difference in the game in Lexington. He came out -- he had a tough night in Knoxville, but he started knocking those -- and he's capable of doing that. But they've got depth, we know that. And we've got depth. But I don't think either one of us go in the game thinking we've got to make 11, 10, 12 threes. But like I said, when it's going in, it makes everything look pretty.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Arkansas.

RICK BARNES: I think they're terrific. I think a year ago they were a game away from the Elite Eight with a couple of really tough calls. I think they're capable of going deep and winning as much as anybody. Their team is a hard team to prep on a one-day prep. They get through that first round game, their opponent, next round, they're a hard team on a one-day prep to get ready for.